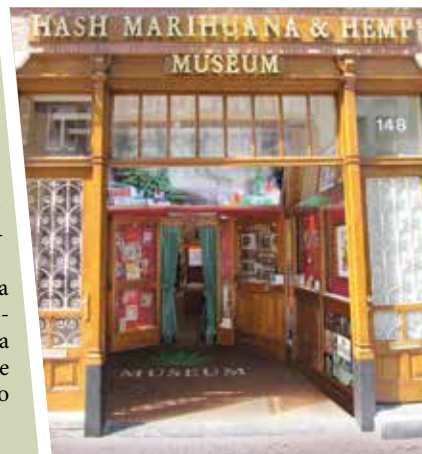




No smoking in cars with children

A new law comes into force in Scotland on Monday banning smoking in cars when children are present, as part of the government's plans for a "tobacco-free generation".

Under the law smokers face a £100 (\$127, 119 euros) on-the-spot fine if caught lighting up in a private vehicle where under-18s are present. The penalty increases up to £1,000 if a case goes to court.



Uruguay to have marijuana museum

Marijuana-friendly Uruguay will soon have a museum dedicated to pot.

"It is a way to connect people who love nature, art and science," said the director of the museum, Eduardo Blasina.

The museum, opening Friday in Montevideo, will help people learn more about one of the world's oldest crops, Blasina said.

Malaria in Roman Empire?



Miami ADNA Analysis of 2,000-year-old teeth unearthed from an Italian graveyard has offered hard evidence that malaria existed during the Roman Empire, researchers said Monday.

The findings are based on mitochondrial DNA -- genetic material inherited from one's mother -- extracted from teeth belonging to 58 adults and 10 children at three imperial-period Italian cemeteries, their report in the journal *Current Biology* said.

Two of the adults in the cemeteries, which date to the 1st and 3rd centuries, were found to have genomic evidence of malaria. Specifically, it was the kind that today causes disease from the parasite *Plasmodium falciparum*.

"There is extensive written evidence describing fevers that sound like malaria in ancient Greece and Rome, but the specific malaria species responsible is unknown," said Stephanie Marciniak of Pennsylvania State University.

"Our data confirm that the species was likely *Plasmodium falciparum*, and that it affected people in different ecological and cultural environments."

Malaria currently kills nearly 450,000 people every year, the majority of them children under the age of five.

Researchers still do not know much about malaria in the Roman Empire, including whether it was a native disease or sporadically imported.

The first DNA evidence of malaria in ancient Rome was detected in 2001 in the skeleton of a child estimated to be 1,500 years old.

The latest study suggests malaria was more widespread than previously known.

"Malaria was likely a significant historical pathogen that caused widespread death in ancient Rome," said study author Hendrik Poinar, director of McMaster's University Ancient DNA Centre. (AFP)



Colosseum in Rome

Egypt says international organs trade network arrested



Representative image

Cairo

Egyptian authorities announced yesterday the arrest of 25 members of an international network allegedly trafficking in human organs, including university professors and doctors.

"Today at dawn, the largest international network for trading human organs has been captured," the country's Administrative Control Authority said in a statement on its website.

The network "is made up of Egyptians and Arabs taking advantage of some of the citizens' difficult economic conditions so that they buy their human organs and sell it for large sums of money," it said. The authority, which is responsible for tracking corruption cases in state institutions, said 25 people were arrested including university professors, doctors, medical workers, owners of medical centres, intermediaries and brokers. They were found in possession of "millions of dollars and gold bullion", it said. (AFP)

Magic-mushroom boosts cancer patients' mindset

Miami Cancer patients often experience mental anguish and stress, but a single dose of a hallucinogen found in psychedelic mushrooms, along with psychological counseling, improved their mindset, two studies said Thursday.

The approach "significantly lessens mental anguish in distressed cancer patients for months at a time," said the findings in the *Journal of Psychopharmacology*.

The first study, led by researchers at New York University's Langone Medical Center, involved 29 people who were given psilocybin,

a naturally occurring component of so-called "magic mushrooms" that is an illegal drug in the United States.

All the people in the study had advanced cancers, whether involving the breasts, gastrointestinal tract or blood.

They had also been diagnosed as suffering from serious psychological distress related to their disease.

After their treatment, 80 percent experienced lasting relief from their distress for more than six months.

A similar study by researchers at Johns Hopkins University involving 51 patients also showed big



Image for representation only

improvements in anxiety and depression. Most patients said their quality of life improved,

and they had more energy, better relationships with family members and were doing well

at work.

"Several also reported variations of spirituality, unusual peacefulness, and increased feelings of altruism," said NYU Langone in a statement. "Our results represent the strongest evidence to date of a clinical benefit from psilocybin therapy, with the potential to transform care for patients with cancer-related psychological distress," said lead investigator Stephen Ross, director of substance-abuse services in psychiatry department at NYU Langone.

"If larger clinical trials prove successful, then we could ultimately have available a

safe, effective, and inexpensive medication -- dispensed under strict control -- to alleviate the distress that increases suicide rates among cancer patients."

Participants experienced no major side effects such as hospitalization or more serious mental health conditions.

Researchers believe that psilocybin activates parts of the brain that are influenced by serotonin, a chemical thought to play a role in mood and anxiety. Experts warned that some people should not be considered candidates for psilocybin therapy, including adolescents and those with schizophrenia. (AFP)